



Moving From Data To Action

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD—VOLUME 2

Volume 2 highlights new examples of NSSE data use to enhance undergraduate teaching and learning

Overview of NSSE

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) annually surveys first-year and senior students at participating baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities to assess the extent to which they engage in and are exposed to proven educational practices that correspond to desirable learning outcomes. Institutions use the results to develop programs and practices that promote student engagement. The survey is administered in the spring term and is short, reliable, and easy for students to complete. It asks undergraduates about:

- Their exposure to and participation in effective educational practices
- Their use of time in and out of class
- What they feel they have gained from their educational experience
- The quality of their interactions with faculty and other students
- The extent to which they perceive the institution provides a supportive environment

Participating institutions receive a detailed report with customized comparisons to selected institutions, supporting materials and resources, and a student-level data file. To date, more than 1,500 colleges and universities in the US and Canada have participated in NSSE.

The NSSE Institute for Effective Educational Practice was created to develop user resources and respond to requests for assistance in using student engagement results to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness. Since the NSSE Institute's inception in 2003, staff and associates have completed a major national study of high performing colleges and universities, made dozens of presentations at national and regional meetings, conducted workshops and Webinars for NSSE users, created user resources, including *Accreditation Toolkits* and *Working with NSSE Data: A Facilitator's Guide*, and worked with many campuses to enhance student success.

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Foreword

“BCSSE and NSSE results have **helped guide** our thinking and planning over the past two years as the campus engaged in a broad-based **strategic planning process**.”

—Marianne D. Kennedy, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs,
Southern Connecticut State University

“Using” NSSE

From its launch more than a decade ago, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was more than just a new survey. NSSE represented a campaign to focus the attention of higher education leaders, faculty, staff, policy makers, news media, and the general public on a number of relatively clear and well understood characteristics of effective environments for teaching and learning. The best way to accomplish this, the reasoning went, was simple enough: treat students as reliable informants on their own experience. Ask them about their exposure to and participation in a range of educationally purposeful activities. NSSE’s emphasis on behavior, rather than values or satisfaction, offered educators a valuable tool to assess the quality of undergraduate education, and to do so in a way that would focus attention on opportunities for improvement.

And improvement is what it’s really all about. NSSE provides participating institutions with diagnostic, actionable information that can catalyze vital, sometimes challenging conversations about the quality of undergraduate education on a given campus. How closely does the experience of our students align with our assumptions, assertions, and aspirations? What standard of performance should we strive for, and how will we know when we achieve it? Who are our least engaged students, and how can we improve their experience? What can administrative offices, academic units, and student affairs

departments do to promote effective educational practices and a climate that supports student success?

Just as NSSE is more than a survey, using NSSE is more than simply participating in the survey administration. For campuses that truly “use” NSSE, the receipt of detailed reports and student data files does not represent the conclusion of a process. Rather, it signals the transition from one phase to the next. After data collection has concluded, the real work begins: making meaning from the results, identifying priorities for action, formulating concrete plans for improvement, and implementing those plans. Each of these steps is arguably more challenging than the one before, but all are necessary for an institution to take full advantage of what NSSE provides. This report provides rich examples of what it truly means to use NSSE.

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Introduction

As institutions continue to use NSSE and its companion instruments, the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), we've endeavored to shine a spotlight on innovative uses and practical application. The first volume of *Lessons from the Field—Volume 1* (2009) captured the growing body of collective wisdom and emerging lessons about the use of student engagement results to improve educational quality. These accounts serve as instructive and inspirational examples for institutions seeking to enhance undergraduate teaching and learning. Over the last several years, the use of NSSE results has expanded, affording another occasion to highlight institutional use in this second volume.

In this publication we highlight approaches different types of institutions have taken to improve the undergraduate experience. Because NSSE focuses on student behavior and effective educational practice, colleges and universities have found many productive ways to use survey results:

- Accreditation self-studies
- Benchmarking
- Curricular reform
- Faculty and staff development
- Grant writing
- Institutional research
- Retention
- State system comparisons

Staff members from the NSSE Institute and doctoral students from NSSE project service teams interviewed representatives from participating colleges and universities. The institutions reflect a range of size, Carnegie type, region, locale, and private-public control. The stories about data use illustrate various ways that assessment can be a worthwhile undertaking when meaningful data are generated and discussed with a wide

campus audience, and results are used to inform efforts to improve educational effectiveness. Understanding how colleges and universities use results and achieve improvements in undergraduate education is important to advancing systemic improvement in higher education. The examples in this volume provide ample inspiration for encouraging institutions to move from collecting data to taking action.

SEARCH TOOL FOR EXAMPLES OF NSSE, FSSE, AND BCSSE DATA USE

Institutional examples included in both volumes of *Lessons from the Field*, and several years of Using NSSE Data sections in *Annual Results*, can now be retrieved through an interactive search tool available on the NSSE Web site. Searches can be performed by keywords, institution name, or Carnegie classification, and by topics such as accreditation, general education assessment, persistence and retention, or advising.

nsse.iub.edu/html/using_nsse_db.cfm



Spelman College

Featured Institutional Use

Assessment for Retention and Persistence

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

In 2003, a team comprising the dean of the college, dean of students, associate dean for faculty development, representatives from admissions and financial aid, and the director of institutional research reviewed retention rates at Allegheny College and found them lower than desired. In addition, NSSE results revealed low first-year students' scores on the Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) benchmark, and, in particular, demonstrated that first-year students did not feel well supported at the institution. These results were identified as a possible contributing factor to the low retention rates.

Concerns about retention and interest in providing students the support they need for academic success motivated the creation of the Learning Commons. The campus library was transformed into a learning center to house numerous support services such as tutoring by peer consultants in writing, public speaking, effective use of technology, and study in a variety of academic subjects. The Commons' professional staff also arranges accommodations for students with disabilities; consults with students on practical study skills such as time management, effective reading, and test taking; coordinates new student orientation; and supports the academic advising program. Since dedicating attention to creating a more supportive learning environment, Allegheny has seen gains on several items in the SCE benchmark for first-year students.

Earlier NSSE results regarding students' limited experiences with diversity were shared with deans and faculty and informed the goal-setting process for Allegheny's former strategic plan. The strategic focus on diversity helped Allegheny increase the diversity



Allegheny College

of faculty, staff, and students, and advance diverse experiences in the curriculum. A continued focus on diversity is evident in the “Global & Local Diversity” initiative, one of the four goals of Allegheny’s new strategic plan, *Combinations 2020*. Other initiatives to increase diversity on campus provide international students with more opportunities to join the Allegheny community; require students to participate in study “away,” either traditional study abroad or domestic internships; and offer an increased number of scholarship awards to students with limited financial resources to expand the socioeconomic background of Allegheny’s student population. The need to increase diversity in terms of faculty and students at Allegheny emerged as an important part of strategic planning in 2009. NSSE results directly influenced this inclusion in the plan and were used to drive decision-making.

An action plan standardizing and regularizing academic assessment has been in development by the college’s Assessment Committee. The plan incorporates three elements: student survey self-reports of learning, faculty assessment of student achievement on the senior capstone project, and alumni

6 Featured Institutional Use

outcomes. The student survey self-reports involve using three instruments: NSSE, Higher Education Research Institute's *Your First College Year* survey, and the *College Senior Survey*. Survey results are to be reported in six areas:

1. Communication skills
2. Critical thinking skills
3. Integrative thinking skills
4. Academic engagement/challenge
5. Experiences with diversity
6. Overall satisfaction with education experience

Findings will be published on the Allegheny Web site for current students, prospective students, parents, and faculty. The new reporting plan will standardize the process of using survey data and allow academic and administrative departments to make better use of NSSE results.

Improving Writing across Disciplines

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Auburn University has participated in eight NSSE administrations since 2002. While it reviews NSSE results at the institution level to provide a general view of the student experience, Auburn also drills down to specific department data. When comparing its students' scores to those of students at peer institutions, Auburn identified areas of concern with student writing skills. Coupled with similar results from the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), the institution targeted writing for improvement and launched an initiative that established an Office of University Writing and a formal University Writing Committee. The new committee and newly hired Director of University Writing outlined specific practices to help departments improve the writing skills of their students. These included common program-level practices, such as identifying competencies expected of graduates in the

department, and common course-level practices, which provided students with the opportunity to revise their writing after receiving feedback from peers and the instructor.

To further assist departments, the committee and the director facilitated workshops and discussions with faculty on how to better incorporate writing into the curriculum. The workshops covered various topics including strategies for providing effective feedback and developing an assessment plan. Faculty who participated in the 2010–11 workshops explained how they had revised course assignments to include writing, revision opportunities, and rubrics to evaluate writing in disciplinary courses. Faculty members agreed that including writing in their courses reinforced the learning experience they wanted for their students. "Writing promotes 'deep learning'—the kind of learning that demands both remembering and understanding of relationships, causes, effects, and implications for new or different situations," said a graduate student in the Department of Kinesiology. A professor of electrical and computer engineering agreed. "I wouldn't have thought to do some of these things if I hadn't attended the symposium." The faculty member developed a writing assignment that asked students to create a written tutorial on information that they got wrong on an exam. His poster included data from a survey he gave students at the end of the term in which they strongly agreed that the writing assignment had helped them learn the material and improved their writing skills.

Additionally, Auburn created a writing-in-the-majors policy, which requires each department to develop its own plan to meet certain standards of writing in the curriculum. Although plans vary based on the department, all plans are required to: (1) provide more than one opportunity for students to practice writing; (2) provide opportunities for students to produce more than one kind of writing; (3) provide opportunities for students to write for different purposes and audiences; (4) provide opportunities for students to revise their

written work based on feedback from peers and instructors; and (5) include an assessment plan that uses gathered assessment data to improve writing experiences. One program that significantly revised its writing plan was civil engineering. Although the program has always emphasized writing, the new writing initiative provided an opportunity to further departmental efforts to become more intentional in developing the writing skills of students. In their plan, the department details seven different kinds of writing, five different purposes of writing, and four forms of feedback it includes in its courses. Every required course, specialty elective, technical elective, and senior design project is reviewed to detail what kind of writing in each course, the purpose of the writing, whether or not the writing is assessed, and what type of feedback is provided to students. Civil engineering's plan and all other approved plans are posted on the Office of University Writing Web site to assist other departments as they work on developing and revising their plans (see Appendix A, Auburn University).

Auburn University monitors progress on the student writing plans through their participation in NSSE and the NSSE Consortium for the Study of Writing in College. By reviewing results on the consortium items and surveying faculty to gain a better understanding of how faculty approach writing in the classroom, Auburn continues to assess and foster improvement in the writing skills of its students. In addition, the University Writing Committee is charged with regularly reviewing the plans developed by programs and the Office of University Writing supports faculty as they make decisions about how to continue to improve student writing and writing instruction provided in the majors. The Office of University Writing has also launched a longitudinal study of faculty conceptions of writing and their practices in teaching writing in upper level courses. The study includes analysis of teaching documents, interviews with faculty, classroom observations of writing instruction, and focus groups with students in those classes.

Focusing on Engagement at the Department Level

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Brigham Young University (BYU) participates in NSSE annually to gain a better understanding of student engagement across various departments and the extent to which BYU's educational goals are being realized. Survey items align closely with the *Aims of a BYU Education*: (1) spiritual strengthening, (2) intellectually enlarging, and (3) character building, leading to (4) lifelong learning and service. When an academic department comes up for review, the Office of Institutional Assessment and Analysis prepares custom reports focused on engagement at the academic unit/degree level for each department when sample size permits along with comparisons to the scores of other students at BYU and at peer institutions. This allows each department to assess their progress on associated learning outcomes in relation to student engagement.

Many departments share their custom reports during retreats where they discuss what the results reveal about their students, curriculum, and associated learning goals. For example, upon reflecting on the data, one academic unit felt its students' use of technology was lower than desired. To address this finding, the department placed greater emphasis on integrating technology into the courses it offered and the area degree requirements. Many units have made good use of NSSE data specific to critical thinking, writing, communication skills (written and oral), technology use, and satisfaction. Additionally, items specific to student interactions with faculty (specifically, working with a faculty member doing research) have been examined.

Annual participation in NSSE has allowed BYU to effectively identify emerging trends in the data over time. Additionally, multi-year participation makes possible the mapping of NSSE data to the university's annual senior survey and alumni questionnaire on

“We rely upon NSSE and FSSE data to **encourage** the campus community to take **responsibility** for student **learning and engagement**.”

—Margaret W. Cohen, Associate Provost for Professional Development and Director
of the Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Missouri-St. Louis

many items in selected content areas. Having a repository of multi-year data provides a rich resource for some academic units at BYU who use the NSSE accreditation toolkits to align their NSSE results with accreditation standards and for future campus planning and initiatives.

WOFFORD COLLEGE

Wofford College uses NSSE results to identify strengths and weaknesses in the undergraduate experience and promotes the use of disaggregated data at the department level. Specifically, a campuswide initiative encourages departments to use NSSE data to enhance curricular offerings and improve teaching practices. Departments were asked to review their NSSE results then organize retreats to discuss how their departmental missions and student learning outcomes might be informed by the data. For example, if improving critical thinking is a learning outcome goal for a department, faculty would examine their

students’ scores on several NSSE items related to this area. When the data revealed that computer science students were underperforming on presentation skills, the department organized workshops and guest lectures on public speaking. The department of foreign languages correlated results from NSSE with those from formal foreign language assessment instruments to discover that study abroad is strongly related to student engagement and the achievement of desired departmental learning outcomes.

Wofford has used NSSE results in its marketing campaigns and posts results publicly on the home page of its institutional Web site. NSSE results are included in a four-page brochure, *Measuring Student Engagement—Learn What Your Student Will Actually Get*, distributed to alumni groups, including the Alumni Executive Council, and used by admissions staff with visiting prospective students and high school counselors. An accessible interpretation of NSSE benchmark results and suggested questions that ask—“How does the survey of student engagement work at Wofford and other participating colleges?” and “How do colleges measure their performance in engaged learning?”—help to interpret and explain Wofford’s NSSE results. Finally, on the institutional Web site, www.wofford.edu, there is a prominent link under the “Admissions” menu to information on NSSE, Wofford’s 2010 NSSE results, and a statement on the institution’s commitment to institutional transparency.

NSSE results have helped spark changes in admissions criteria at Wofford College. Specifically, community service and civic engagement are important aspects of student life at Wofford with students engaging in service not only in their local



Wofford College

communities but also abroad. For example, many Wofford students have taught in elementary schools in Guatemala or worked in an HIV/AIDS clinic in Paris. As a result of the emphasis placed on community service and civic engagement among undergraduate students, Wofford College has begun to emphasize volunteer experience when reviewing the applications of prospective students.

Developing a Culture of Evidence

CALIFORNIA LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

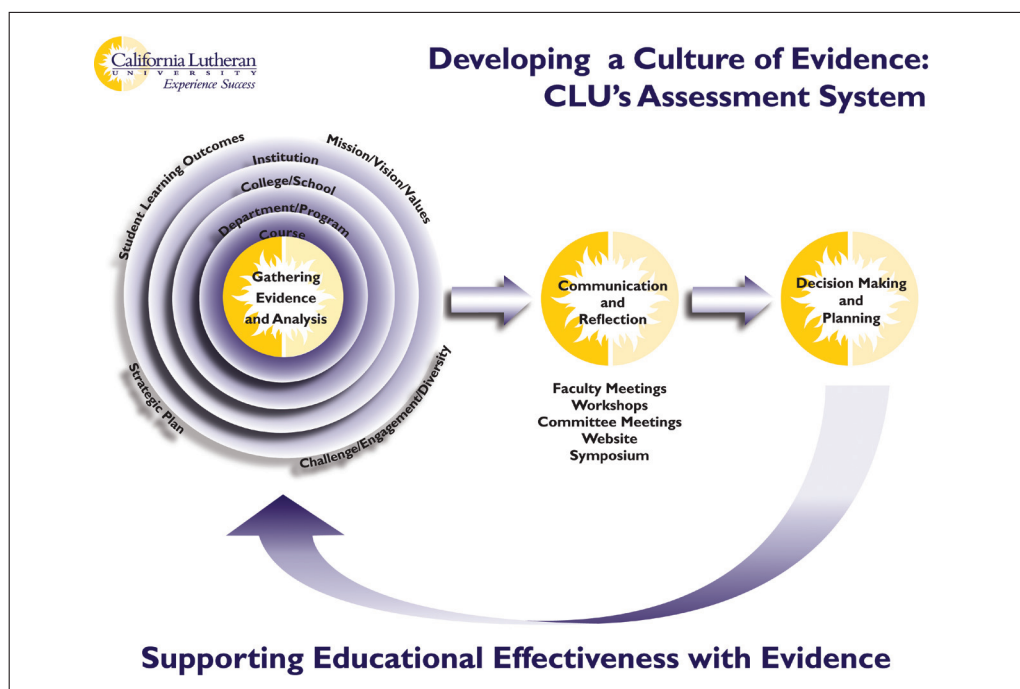
California Lutheran University (CLU) participates in numerous external and internal surveys to gather direct and indirect evidence of educational effectiveness at many levels of the university. CLU's Assessment Committee, comprising senior administrators, faculty, and professional staff, reviews, analyzes, and integrates survey results into reports that inform decision-making. Internal assessment survey results are also actively used for program review. Department chairs and faculty complete review templates and attach survey results and demographics as appendices (see Figure 1).

First-year programs are assessed using BCSSE and NSSE results as part of the Foundations of Excellence™ process. BCSSE results and BCSSE-NSSE combined results are used by the Assessment Committee to evaluate the first-year experience and are presented at faculty meetings.

The Office of Student Life is also involved in assessment activities. Given that about 40% of students at CLU are commuter students and 33% are transfer students, with the majority coming from two-year institutions in Ventura County (CA), the Office of Student Life was curious about the level of engagement of commuter and transfer students compared to residential students and those who started at CLU. They reviewed NSSE results and saw a gap in the co-curricular engagement of transfer and commuter students. This finding generated an increase in programs focused on the needs of commuter students and the creation of a peer-mentoring program for transfer students.

NSSE results are widely shared at CLU. The provost and Office of Educational Effectiveness, along with

Figure 1: CALIFORNIA LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY'S ASSESSMENT CYCLE



NSSE TIP #1:

Actively encourage student participation in NSSE

Student participation in NSSE is critical to an institution's efforts to use data to improve educational offerings. Simply put, more respondents generally yield better quality data. Sampling error, total completions, and response rates are important measures of data quality, and are important for increasing confidence in the results among a wider audience. NSSE works with institutions to personalize materials used to contact each student; however, institutional efforts can effectively supplement the messages sent to students by NSSE. Institutions need to assess their campus culture and determine appropriate methods to reach students. Institutions often cite technology use and the involvement of faculty and staff as key features of their promotional efforts. Also, survey publicity such as flyers and posters as well as small incentives provided for participation can help send a message to the whole campus that the data are valuable for institutional improvement. We offer suggestions for increasing student participation and institutional examples at: nsse.iub.edu/links/survey_promo.

the vice president of student affairs, disseminate NSSE results to CLU's campus constituents. The provost also presents results to the California Board of Regents. The Office of Educational Effectiveness makes assessment information available on the institution's Web site. During an annual summer retreat on student leadership, the Office of Student Life brings in institutional research staff, retention staff, and others to share data and help participants work this information into programming.

The First-Year Experience

FRANKLIN PIERCE UNIVERSITY

Franklin Pierce University (Pierce) has conducted four NSSE administrations and, more recently, administered FSSE to assess quality in undergraduate education. Pierce began with an emphasis on assessing the impact of the required first-year seminar, Individual and Community. The institution revised the seminar in 2008 to provide incoming students with more choices, build greater faculty enthusiasm for the course, and increase curricular commonality via common summer readings, advising, and community service projects. Two of the major common learning goals for the seminar include the development of collaborative learning skills and active involvement in the community. The seminar's requirement of a number

of hours of civic and community engagement activities, which are predetermined by each professor, introduces the university mission of preparing students to become active, engaged citizens and leaders of conscience.

NSSE results showing that first-year and senior involvement in community service and volunteer work at Pierce far exceeded students' participation at comparison institutions provided confirmation of the learning goal of active involvement in the community and for strengthening students' responsibility toward and contribution to the community. Student feedback suggested that entering students who had participated in community service in high school did not necessarily expect to continue their efforts in college due to academic demands. However, the first-year seminar requirement created time for community service and positively influenced their continued involvement in service throughout their years at Pierce. Additional efforts to combine NSSE results with a full inventory of student involvement in other high-impact educational practices, including active and collaborative learning, common reading, undergraduate research, and capstone experiences, are part of the university's program review process.

TARLETON STATE UNIVERSITY

Tarleton State University (Tarleton) has administered NSSE on a biennial basis since 2001 as a member of

the Texas A&M University system. An ad hoc group of campus leaders holds ongoing discussions to review Tarleton's NSSE results and compare its scores with other Texas A&M University institutions, institutions within its Carnegie classification, and the annual NSSE cohort.

In 2010, Tarleton administered BCSSE during new student orientation sessions then chose a local NSSE administration in the spring 2011 semester. Combined results from the surveys are being used to continue the assessment of the effectiveness of Duck Camp, a three-day, off-campus orientation program for first-year students designed to assist in the transition from high school to college and promote engagement. The initiative was created in 1995 to help first-year students develop friendships with their peers prior to the start of the academic year as well as learn about the opportunities and activities available at Tarleton. In 2010, approximately one-half of the incoming first-year class participated in the camp. A committee of student affairs, academic affairs, and enrollment management administrative staff has been examining BCSSE and NSSE data and other information about first-year student retention and satisfaction to better understand the camp and other orientation experiences on first-year student engagement. This effort to bring stakeholders from across campus to review assessment data has served as a model for increasing collaboration across the institution. Tarleton staff also hopes that disseminating information about the effectiveness of Duck Camp will promote more partnerships among campus departments and groups.

Applying NSSE Results in Assessment, Accountability, and Accreditation

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Georgia State University (GSU) first participated in NSSE seeking an assessment instrument that would

go beyond student satisfaction and help measure student engagement in curricular and co-curricular activities. GSU has administered NSSE six times to date and triangulates findings from NSSE with other assessment instruments including BCSSE, FSSE, and the institution's Survey of Recent Graduates. As a member of the Voluntary System of Accountability

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NSSE AND THE VOLUNTARY SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY (VSA)?

NSSE has been selected as one of four assessment instruments about students' experiences and perceptions for the VSA. Developed through a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), the VSA is designed to help institutions:

- Demonstrate accountability and stewardship to the public
- Measure educational outcomes to identify effective educational practice
- Assemble information that is accessible, understandable, and comparable.

WHAT IS THE COLLEGE PORTRAIT?

The VSA's College Portrait provides information on institutional and student characteristics, attendance costs, student engagement, and student learning outcomes. This information is intended for students, families, policy-makers, campus faculty and staff, the general public, and other higher education stakeholders.

More Information:

The VSA Program
www.voluntarysystem.org

NSSE and VSA FAQ
nsse.iub.edu/html/vsa_faqs.cfm

(VSA), GSU uses NSSE data for its College Portrait. NSSE results are also used to inform GSU's internal assessment of critical thinking and writing.

These assessment efforts provide GSU faculty, staff, and administration with a much broader understanding of student engagement—one that includes the perspectives of incoming students, first-year students, seniors who are graduating, and faculty. NSSE results are shared with and used by a variety of stakeholders. For example, the Office of Undergraduate Studies explores retention by comparing NSSE responses of those students who left the institution with those who are still enrolled. This comparison is part of an important initiative at GSU to develop a retention model based on both direct and indirect data.

GSU is also crafting a new comprehensive strategic plan focused on the advancement of undergraduate student success and seeks to become a national model for undergraduate education. NSSE data have informed the way the university has positioned itself as an institution whose students value diversity, academic achievement, and community and global engagement.

NSSE results were used in the preparation of GSU's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for reaccreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), in 2008. The focus of the QEP was to increase undergraduate students' critical thinking and writing skills in their major field of study. Upon review by the QEP Leadership Committee, NSSE data revealed that when compared to their Carnegie peers, GSU seniors wrote fewer short papers and felt their undergraduate experience did not contribute much to their critical thinking abilities. The committee found similar results from an internal survey administered each semester to recent graduates that measures learning outcomes and academic program satisfaction. These findings informed the final QEP, *Critical Thinking Through Writing*, which proposed targeted efforts to improve students' critical thinking and writing skills in their major field of study.

Encouraging Student-Faculty Interaction

GRAND VIEW UNIVERSITY

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Grand View University (Grand View) was launched in 2005 with Title III grant funds. The Title III activity director/learning specialist was charged with directing programs to improve the retention and achievement of Grand View students. One of the assessment tools funded in the Title III grant was NSSE. The Title III grant allowed Grand View to increase awareness of the uses of the data for assessment as well as promote NSSE results to senior administration for use in strategic planning and benchmarking. Grand View also administers the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory (CSI) and results from this survey are well embedded in their assessment protocols.

NSSE results have been great conversation starters across campus constituencies resulting in the formation of a team to move beyond simply reviewing the assessment data. Using findings from focus groups with students, the team discovered that first-year students felt Grand View provided a very supportive campus environment; whereas seniors felt that the



Grand View University

Response Rate Award

SPELMAN COLLEGE

In 2010, NSSE wanted to learn more about and document successful efforts by institutions to encourage or increase student participation in the survey. We identified eight institutions with high response rates based on categories of size and control. In addition, we identified Spelman College as having the largest improvement in response rate between a recent administration and 2010.

Spelman College, a private, liberal arts, historically Black college for women, has participated in four NSSE administrations. After experiencing an unexpected decline in its 2007 response rate, Spelman launched a plan to increase this rate by 50% in its 2010 administration. The Office of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning implemented a multi-faceted approach to engage the entire campus community, which included the following strategies:

- Coordinated joint efforts with the Dean's Office of Undergraduate Studies to provide incentives for participation
- Disseminated campuswide emails on the importance of NSSE participation and weekly updates on response rates
- Solicited involvement from the entire campus, particularly atypical areas, such as Alumnae Affairs, Career Placement, and Web Design
- Provided visual reminders for students by placing flyers in high-traffic areas, including residence halls and dining areas
- Enlisted the support of faculty members

Spelman's improved response rate is a result of the coordinated efforts of the Office of Undergraduate Studies, including the First-Year Experience (FYE) instructors and senior advisors. Instructors encouraged students to voluntarily participate and emphasized NSSE's importance to the college's assessment activities. In addition, several departments promoted NSSE among their senior majors. For instance, sociology, anthropology, biology, dual degree-engineering, and educational studies highlighted the value of student input on the quality of their experience in their classes. These initiatives yielded greater participation and led to a higher response rate.

Increased student participation in the NSSE 2010 administration was important to Spelman because it was completing a 10-year span of assessment that included four NSSE administrations, which allowed Spelman to use multi-year results to: (1) support the college's reaffirmation of accreditation; (2) strengthen the Sophomore Experience by identifying gaps in FYE; and (3) assess trends in student engagement to improve services and programs. By challenging the entire campus community to improve student participation in NSSE, Spelman was able to significantly improve their response rate from 28% in 2007 to 70% in 2010.

institution was not providing enough help for them to succeed academically. Another disappointing NSSE result concerned the less than desirable percentage of seniors who indicated they would choose to attend Grand View if they could start over again.

A major initiative motivated by Grand View's NSSE results is the Faculty-Student Engagement program that encourages faculty and staff members to engage with their students in educationally purposeful activities outside of the classroom such as field trips, cultural activities, academic support sessions, and attendance at conferences. Mini-grants are available to faculty for special programs that are based on specific learning outcomes. For example, an English professor hosted a dinner in her home for students in her cross-cultural communications class, featuring foods from a variety of ethnic traditions, while education students were funded to attend the Iowa Teachers Conference.

Looking ahead, Grand View is determining how to continue to use NSSE results in its assessment plan and has decided on a three-year participation cycle. Grand View is implementing a new core in 2012 and plans to analyze NSSE results over time to assess the impact of the curricular changes on students. The institution is also reviewing the best ways to incorporate NSSE results into its 2014 reaccreditation self-study for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Increasing Faculty Use of NSSE Data

JUNIATA COLLEGE

Juniata College can be described as a “data rich” institution. Senior administrators are firm believers in gathering as much data as possible to inform their planning efforts. NSSE results feed into Juniata's planning efforts and were used in the reaccreditation process, beginning with Juniata's 2001 self-study for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), and will be used for their upcoming review in 2012–13. NSSE benchmarks and high-impact practices are integrated into

their strategic plan, and results on survey items such as study abroad, internships, and critical and analytical skills will be monitored in their long-range planning.

Faculty members at Juniata have shown increasing interest in NSSE results, and the International Learning Assessment Committee has been charged with reviewing the impact of study abroad. Because a large student cohort participated in study abroad in 2010, the committee plans to examine NSSE results for correlations between study abroad and levels of engagement.

Faculty members have also used NSSE items related to attendance at cultural events—some are mandatory for Juniata students—to study their impact on student engagement. A number of faculty members have expressed interest in pursuing research on NSSE to find new ways to use the data. The faculty Academic Planning and Assessment Committee (APAC) works with the director of institutional research to interpret and disseminate NSSE results to the faculty at large. One expected use of NSSE results is in the periodic review of academic departments.

Results from NSSE and other national learning assessments were also used to evaluate the writing



Juniata College

NSSE TIP #2:
Engage in Multi-Year Analysis of NSSE Data

More than three-quarters of institutions participating in NSSE have administered the survey more than once (see Table 1). As a result, we strongly encourage institutions to engage in multi-year data analysis in order to identify changes over time, track trend, and evaluate specific campus initiatives. We generally recommend cohort comparisons, which compares your estimate of first-year student engagement in one year with your estimate of first-year student engagement in another year (likewise for seniors). Prior to engaging in this analysis, institutions should review the quality of their data for both samples and take into account changes in NSSE items and reports across the years. Preparing a NSSE multi-year data set for analysis involves identifying variables that have not changed over the years and then merging the cases from all years into a single file. To further assist institutions with this process, NSSE has prepared the NSSE *Multi-Year Data Analysis Guide* available at nsse.iub.edu/links/mydag.

program at Juniata. When compared with their peers, Juniata students were not as effective as desired in their critical thinking and analytical writing skills. In addition, faculty members expressed a lack of confidence in the efficacy of the first-year writing program and about student writing competencies across the curriculum. NSSE results revealing that Juniata students wrote fewer long papers and more short papers than their counterparts at peer institutions informed a large part of the revision of the program.

Teaching and Learning for Educational Effectiveness

TULANE UNIVERSITY

Tulane University used NSSE results related to students’ expectations for and involvement in service-learning, undergraduate research, and internships, plus other indicators of students’ interest in public service and research, to establish the warrant for the Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching (CELT). Developed as part of its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) reaffirmation, the CELT will be the hub for fostering engagement in four core areas: (1) research engagement; (2) social innovation engagement; (3) classroom engagement; and (4) experiential engagement. Growing out of Tulane’s recognized

Table 1: Participation Frequency of 2011 NSSE Institutions¹

First-Time Participants	42	6%
Two-to-Three Time Participants	301	40%
Four-to-Five Time Participants	222	29%
Six-to-Twelve Time Participants	195	26%

¹ Participation numbers represent all colleges and universities that participated in a standard NSSE administration wherein all sampling and participant recruitment were administered by NSSE. Data summaries in some NSSE reports may exclude institutions where conditions (e.g., low respondent n, lack of data for weighting, international institutions) rendered data inadequate for standard comparisons.



Tulane University

NSSE TIP #3:**Contextualize your NSSE Data Using Cognitive Interviews and Focus Groups**

Techniques such as cognitive interviews and focus groups can be used by institutions to provide a more contextualized understanding of student responses to NSSE. Cognitive interviewing can be employed to gain an enriched sense of respondents' perceptions of particular items and related findings. Focus groups provide an opportunity to contextualize and validate the meaning of NSSE aggregate results. Sharing contextualized information about what students have in mind when they respond to survey questions can help enliven discussions about NSSE results by providing concrete examples of student behaviors and institutional practices. Additionally, information obtained from these efforts can help enhance understanding of results to increase the likelihood that reform efforts based on survey results would prove effective. The NSSE Institute created a step-by-step guide to conducting cognitive interviews and focus groups that will help institutions develop a deeper understanding of their NSSE data. This guide is available at nsse.iub.edu/links/cognitive_interviews.

strength in public service and service-learning, as well as students' keen interest in engaging in public service programs, the project will expand opportunities for more students and faculty to participate in meaningful, high-impact practices and learning experiences that complement their academic and career goals.

NSSE data related to the activities of CELT will be used as baseline indicators, and future results will be used to monitor student participation and educational effectiveness. For example, NSSE items related to working with other students on projects during class will serve as a proxy for engaged classroom activity, and participation in undergraduate research and service-learning will provide feedback on participation in high-impact activities. Highlights of Tulane's assessment plan include the mapping of learning outcomes to assessment activities and the use of multiple measures and methods. To assess the extent to which involvement in the CELT activities relates to the learning outcome of "effectively live and work in a culturally complex society," Tulane will collect evidence using the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Intercultural Knowledge and Competence rubric and review NSSE results on diverse interactions and gains in understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Tulane's plan promises to create an enriched environment for student learning and promote innovative approaches to teaching.

The Importance of Advising**WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCU) participated in NSSE in 2008 and 2010 as a Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) consortium member. Through consortium participation, PASSHE institutions appended questions on advising and course availability to the NSSE survey. Although WCU student responses in 2008 were mostly positive, the dean of undergraduate studies identified one area of concern—students did not feel they received high quality advising. In response, advising became a major priority for the institution and the University Academic Advising Committee (UAAC) was charged with creating an improvement plan. The plan included a new classification of "internal transfer" to designate students who wish to change majors and those with undeclared majors, and the dedication of two advisors with comprehensive knowledge of all departmental requirements to this group. Orientation sessions for new first-year students, and a handout that describes the responsibilities of students and advisors, helped to clarify students' understanding of the advising process.

“NSSE complements our existing data sources to provide a **more complete picture**, and has been a catalyst on our campus for **rethinking** and **reimagining** the undergraduate learning experience.”

—Brian D. Pettigrew, Assistant Vice President (Institutional Research & Planning) & Registrar, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada

To further emphasize the importance of advising as teaching, the institution negotiated with the faculty union to include advising as part of the statement of expectations for faculty performance.

In spring 2011, the UAAC at WCU administered two additional internal assessments, student satisfaction and individual departmental surveys. The UAAC is studying the results, along with data gathered from all other sources, on specific advising needs, topics discussed in advising sessions, accessibility and availability of advisors, and satisfaction with the advising experience. The UAAC also examined the relationship between frequency and extent of advising and student satisfaction with the advising process across departments to develop a series of best practices. Rather than training workshops, faculty-advising liaisons from each department, about half of whom are department chairs, participate in “shared best practices”

sessions. The meetings occur once a semester and provide an opportunity to exchange strategies and experiences. Since implementing these initiatives, WCU’s scores on advising-related items from its NSSE 2010 administration have shown improvement.

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

To accomplish its goal of improving the effectiveness of advising programs, the administration and advising community at the University of Tennessee (UT Knoxville) examined a number of indicators such as the ratio of students per advisor, information from student focus groups regarding their advising experiences, and a comprehensive program review by external consultants. They also examined student responses on NSSE items that align with the university’s advising program goals and learning outcomes, which include guiding students toward

NSSE TIP #4:

Disseminate NSSE Results Widely

NSSE encourages public reporting of student engagement results in ways that serve to increase understanding of college quality and that support institutional improvement efforts. Many colleges and universities have made their NSSE survey results publicly available on their institutional Web sites. This is critical at a time when transparency and public accountability figure prominently in our lexicon. Some institutions display all their NSSE reports online, while others post selected results highlighting institutional strengths or news releases emphasizing institutional participation and findings relevant to institutional performance priorities. More institutions are posting their *NSSE Executive Snapshot* and *The Student Experience in Brief*, two short reports that summarize key student engagement findings. Participants in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) that elect to feature NSSE results have the opportunity to post additional information about their performance. Translating results into accurate, accessible formats for different audiences can be challenging. To that end, NSSE is committed to aiding institutions as they seek to display their results. Resources are available at: nsse.iub.edu/html/vsa.cfm.



University of Tennessee, Knoxville

academic support services, programs in service-learning and undergraduate research:

- Use of academic support programs
- Frequency of discussions about career plans with advisors or faculty
- Perceptions of the academic experience
- Participation in service-learning and undergraduate research
- Frequency of diverse interactions

A comprehensive campus initiative, *Ready for the World*, is designed to enhance students' understanding of intercultural diversity and global affairs. As a result of a two-year assessment process, UT Knoxville has increased the number of full-time academic advisors, restructured orientation advising for first-year students—which includes extended contact with college academic advisors and individual advising sessions—and implemented a new advising policy that targets at-risk students, such as new transfers, students on probation, and those without declared majors.

NSSE TIP #5:

Considerations for NSSE Participation Cycles

The most appropriate participation cycle for each institution depends on the purposes for the assessment, but four considerations might influence these decisions. Specifically, your institution may be:

1. **Conducting NSSE as part of your regular assessment plan.** Regular plans establish a cycle of administration that fits institutional assessment needs. A standard assessment plan might place NSSE administrations on a three-year cycle to collect periodic information about educational quality.
2. **Evaluating the effectiveness of a new programmatic offering or change in the curriculum.** Implementing a change in undergraduate education? Scheduling a NSSE administration before and after the reform has been implemented can help assess the impact of the change on student engagement.
3. **Using results for accreditation.** For a self-study over a three-year time span, the most useful time to register for NSSE is in year one. In year two and three, an institution can review and share results to determine a course of action. For longer accreditation cycles, in the first year or two of the self-study, NSSE results can help determine where to focus attention. Another NSSE administration three to four years later would help evaluate the impact of such changes.
4. **Allocating institutional assessment resources such as costs, staff time, and the desire to collect other data for triangulation purposes.** Consider your schedule of undergraduate surveys to avoid survey fatigue among students.

Quick Takes

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Dalhousie University's 2008 NSSE results indicated a need to help first-year students become more engaged academically and form stronger connections to the Dalhousie community. A new position was established in the Centre for Learning & Teaching, through the Office of the Vice-President Academic and Provost, specifically to nurture and develop high-impact student engagement initiatives.

Dalhousie values its overall NSSE results, but breaking results down by program and department helped each faculty review strengths and areas that need improvement. For example, in computer science, NSSE results revealed a need for more active and collaborative learning, so more hands-on, project-driven first-year classes were implemented to help students link theory with everyday applications. Student response to these classes was so enthusiastic, additional sections needed to be added. As a result, the department even saw improvement in second-year retention rates.



Dalhousie University (Halifax, NS)

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

Kalamazoo College's NSSE results reveal consistently high results on items that reflect the hallmarks of the institution's academic and experiential programs. However, when a downward trend was noticed on a particular NSSE benchmark, the institution planned specific action and sought more information through campuswide discussions. For example, student focus groups were conducted to better understand student perceptions of aspects of the supportive campus environment benchmark. Findings from both NSSE and the focus groups informed several policy changes and influenced how student space is designed on campus, including major renovation of the student center. One of the most effective uses of NSSE data has been to shine a light on the experiences of students. In response to SCE (Supportive Campus Environment) results that were lower than desired, Kalamazoo has had in-depth conversations with students in focus groups.

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY

Norfolk State University (NSU) has participated in several administrations of NSSE, BCSSE, and FSSE. Results from all three surveys were used in their Walmart Minority Student Success Grant. Specifically, NSU featured BCSSE, NSSE, and FSSE results to demonstrate the gap between student expectations, student experiences, and faculty perceptions (see Appendix B, Norfolk State University). They paid special attention to in-class engagement and followed up on the topics with the largest gaps, including class presentations and group work, by conducting interviews with faculty and students. Results from these efforts helped the institution realize that attention from faculty was needed to improve the student experience. The grant focused on a faculty-led mentoring program for first-generation students who participate in Summer Bridge. Mentoring clusters of five to seven students,

one faculty member, and peer leaders were established to promote collaboration and student success. NSSE has helped to encourage faculty interest in student learning processes and effective ways to contribute to student learning, as well as how faculty can further measure student engagement in the classroom.

TEXAS A&M CORPUS CHRISTI

Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi prepares targeted reports for individual departments in the Division of Student Affairs, such as first-year programs and student housing, that include longitudinal analysis of relevant NSSE items. For example, University Center and Campus Activities receives results on the time students spend in co-curricular activities and the extent to which students perceive an emphasis on attending campus events. A main report for University Housing examines whether students who live on campus are more engaged than students who live off campus. These results provide evidence to support departments' assessment reports for the Council for the Advancement of Standards



Texas A&M–Corpus Christi

in Higher Education. In addition, breakout reports comparing BCSSE and NSSE data have been used by first-year programs to better understand how the institution is meeting first-year students' expectations.

SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) has participated in BCSSE and NSSE since 2004, and is following cohorts of students who completed both BCSSE and NSSE to learn more about their college experiences and persistence toward a degree. They also utilize the National Student Clearinghouse to track students in the cohort who have left SCSU. Their analyses indicate that the non-returning students had a different level of relationships with faculty members, peers, and administrative personnel and offices than did the returning students. At SCSU, one of the two most important predictors of whether students in the cohort persisted to their junior year was the Supportive Campus Environment (SCE) benchmark. The importance of this factor in student persistence is emphasized with faculty and staff who work with students in the first-year experience.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK ONEONTA

In fall 2009, a task force composed of faculty, administrative staff, and one student was charged with establishing a plan to highlight the “distinctiveness” of the State University of New York Oneonta (SUNY Oneonta) from other comparable institutions. To derive “important attributes” and “distinguishing strengths,” the task force reviewed numerous resources and internal and external survey results, including the Student Opinion Survey (SOS), NSSE, Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), strategic planning documents, and enrollment data. Additional information was collected through an email survey of academic department heads and an open forum held for the campus community. Four themes of

“distinctiveness” emerged: reputation, engagement, service, and environment. Scores from the SOS from 2009, admissions data, a rigorous assessment program, and participation as an early adopter in the VSA program were used as evidence of SUNY Oneonta’s reputation of excellence in teaching and learning.

NSSE benchmark scores from 2008 provided support that SUNY Oneonta fostered high levels of student engagement inside and outside of the classroom. In addition, NSSE results for seniors on survey items related to technology demonstrated that students were using computer and information technologies more frequently than their SUNY system counterparts.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) has used five administrations of NSSE and one administration of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) as indirect and direct measures, respectively, to assess and guide revision of its general education core curriculum, the Basic Studies Program. UNCW is an Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) Partner campus, part of a multi-year, national project to develop rubrics for assessing general education learning outcomes. In 2008, UNCW’s efforts focused on developing 37 common learning outcomes that were used to select departments and courses from which student work would be assessed.

CLA scores were used to assess critical thinking and written communications skills. NSSE results were used to establish trends and to plan for longitudinal disaggregation of data by department and school. Concern over less than desirable results on NSSE items relating to integrating ideas or information from various sources also generated a rubric-based plan for assessing information literacy.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

The University of Texas at Tyler (UT Tyler) participates in NSSE to gather evidence for strategic planning and accreditation. UT Tyler’s 2009–2015 strategic plan, *Inspiring Excellence*, incorporates assessment of study abroad and global citizenship using NSSE results. Along similar lines, UT Tyler’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), “Global Awareness through Education” (GATE), was submitted in 2010 for reaffirmation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The goals of the QEP are to infuse the general education curriculum with global issues and topics, create new student learning communities centered on a study abroad experience, and provide greatly expanded co-curricular activities on campus led by the GATE learning community students and faculty.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK POTSDAM

The State University of New York Potsdam (SUNY Potsdam) used its results from nine NSSE administrations to support its 2010 Self-Study for reaffirmation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Specific NSSE items were aligned with MSCHE standards to report levels of student participation in undergraduate research and service-learning, as well as to measure the degree of student interaction with faculty, administrators, and student affairs personnel. NSSE results were also used to review general education and academic advising at the institution.

SUNY Potsdam has made great efforts to encourage data use at the department level. NSSE results are featured on the institution’s Web site and use of NSSE data has been promoted across campus. Department chairs disseminate disaggregated results in breakout reports and facilitate getting the data into the hands of faculty to help improve pedagogical practice.

Conclusion

NSSE provides information that helps colleges and universities plan strategies and programs to assess and improve the quality of undergraduate education. The institutions featured in this report illustrate valuable maxims and instructive lessons for maximizing the use and impact of NSSE results.

Approaching NSSE Results

NSSE results are most valuable for assessment when used in the context of institutional mission, focus, and student characteristics. To facilitate this process, NSSE has developed a set of recommendations based on good practices as well as thematic analyses and interpretation of results from the institutional stories featured in this publication.

Create a NSSE committee, team, or task force on your campus

Develop a communication strategy before, during, and after survey administration so stakeholders will take interest and support the incorporation of NSSE into institutional improvement efforts. At Allegheny College, a team comprising the dean of the college, dean of students, associate dean for faculty development, representatives from admissions and financial aid, and the director of institutional research reviewed retention rates at the institution and found them lower than desired. This concern propelled the team to begin work on an action plan standardizing and regularizing academic assessment. In an effort to keep everyone informed about their NSSE administration, Spelman College disseminated campuswide emails on the importance of NSSE participation and weekly updates on response rates.

Share NSSE results widely throughout the campus to stimulate action

Many institutions have found that sharing the results at retreats, faculty workshops, first-year experience

task forces, and other groups is a productive way to stimulate action. Wofford College created a campuswide initiative encouraging departments to use NSSE data to enhance curricular offerings and improve teaching practices. Departments were asked to review their NSSE results then organize retreats to discuss how their departmental missions and student learning outcomes might be informed by the data. During the annual summer retreat at California Lutheran University, the Office of Student Life brings in institutional research and retention staff, and others, to share data and help participants work this information into programming initiatives.

Share NSSE results at the department level

Sharing NSSE results at the department level is a helpful way to focus effort and promote positive change on campus. Department chairs can take the lead in disseminating disaggregated results in breakout reports and facilitate getting the data into the hands of faculty to help improve pedagogical practice. At Brigham Young University, many departments share their custom reports during retreats where they discuss what the results reveal about their students, curriculum, and associated learning goals. Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi prepares targeted reports for individual departments in the Division of Student Affairs, such as first-year programs and student housing, that include longitudinal analysis of relevant NSSE items.

Validate findings by linking NSSE data to other data sources

Corroboration of engagement results with other institutional data increases confidence in data use for decision-making. Georgia State University integrates NSSE, BCSSE, and FSSE along with specific institutional data to create a broader understanding of student engagement. Auburn University launched

an initiative that established an Office of University Writing and a formal University Writing Committee based on results from NSSE and the Collegiate Learning Assessment.

Post NSSE results on your institutional Web site to enhance communication and promote transparency

Many institutions have created Web sites to promote public understanding of NSSE results. Wofford College has used NSSE results in its marketing campaigns and posts results on the home page of its institutional Web site. NSSE results are included in a four-page brochure, *Measuring Student Engagement—Learn What Your Student Will Actually Get*, distributed to alumni groups, including the Alumni Executive Council, and used by admissions staff with visiting prospective students and high school counselors. SUNY Potsdam has made great efforts to encourage data use by posting NSSE results on the institution's Web site. Allegheny College published NSSE findings on their Web site for current students, prospective students and parents, and also provided them to faculty.



Tulane University

Using NSSE Data to Address Campus Issues and Problems

Our efforts in this document focused on providing practical examples from the field of what works at other institutions. NSSE results can be used as a lens into current campus issues or concerns. Institutions often share common challenges such as less than desired retention or completion rates, or are simply interested in improving the learning environment. There is no single approach to tackling these issues. However, when examining your NSSE data and considering possible strategies for your action plan, consider the following questions:

- What data confirm facts you already know?
- What results are surprising?
- What areas appear to be meeting your expectations?
- What areas appear to need further investigation?

Answers to these questions can provide a framework for a more substantive action plan to tackle an issue.

Final Thoughts

We began this document highlighting different approaches institutions have taken to incorporate NSSE results into their assessment efforts. Our collaborative work with colleges and universities over the past few years has led us to determine effective approaches institutions should take in using their NSSE results. Although we have outlined many approaches here, we are interested in knowing how you are using your NSSE data. Please send specific examples of internal reports or brochures highlighting NSSE data, usage strategies, and special activities to us at nsse@indiana.edu. These examples will form a shared resource for institutions and assist in our ongoing efforts to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience for all students.

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Appendix A: Excerpt - Writing in the Civil Engineering Major at Auburn University

Introduction

Accreditation requirements for Auburn University's Bachelor of Civil Engineering (BCE) degree program have resulted in the development of a set of program outcomes. One of the program outcomes is that students will be able to communicate effectively upon graduation. This includes both oral and written communication. So, the BCE program has included writing in the major for many years, and the faculty of the Department of Civil Engineering regularly assess student's communication skills. The "Writing in Major" initiative at Auburn University has provided the Department with an opportunity to more clearly define a plan to develop the writing skills of our students. That plan is described below.

Kinds of Writing

Civil engineering graduates must be able to communicate many types of information. The following list identifies the fundamental kinds of writing, or communication, that makes up most of the professional communications of civil engineering graduates.

1. Communication of engineering analysis and design through calculations (Development of this skill is an integral part of most courses in the curriculum.)
2. Organization and presentation of data through tables and plots
3. Descriptions of methodologies or procedures such as those used to define and solve a problem, collect data, or complete a task
4. Critical analysis or summary of data, project status, or results
5. Discussions of the impact of design or operational decisions on the performance of systems, and how system performance impacts individuals, groups of individuals, and the environment
6. Oral presentation of engineering principals, proposals, findings and recommendations
7. Communication of design of system details through engineering drawings

Purposes and Audiences

One or more of the kinds of writing identified above is the normal work product of a civil engineer. Writing is required to secure clients or projects, perform those projects, and to document the engineering work and recommendations. A list of typical purposes and audiences for civil engineering writing follows.

1. Routine communication with the public, clients, and project team members
2. Develop a scope of work
3. Engineering reports for use by clients, other engineers, contractors, regulators and policy makers
4. Communication of design details through contract documents
5. Writing to learn

Feedback and Revision

Review and feedback are provided to students through various methods in the individual courses in the program. Types of feedback and opportunities for revisions are described below.

1. Instructor feedback on individual assignments that progressively strengthens communication skills.
2. Peer review of individual assignments prior to submittal
3. Peer review of group assignments prior to submittal
4. Instructor feedback on a draft(s) to guide revisions prior to submittal of the final product

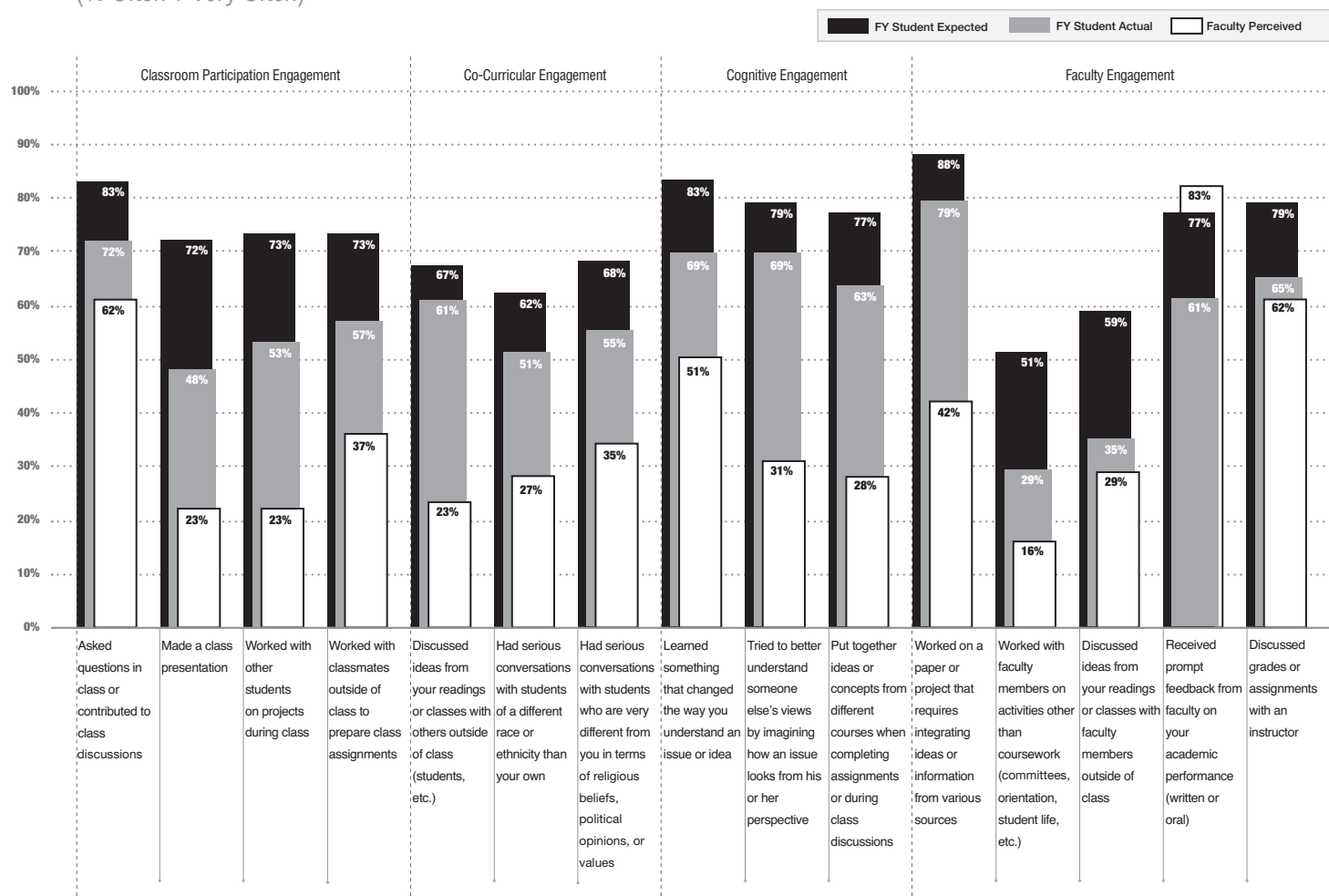
Assessment Plan

Effectiveness of student writing of each kind will be evaluated by course instructors as shown in Table 1. The instructor will provide a summary of the evaluation with recommendations for improvement to the Civil Engineering Assessment Committee. Each year the Assessment Committee will review the summaries of writing effectiveness along with the other program assessment data. The Assessment Committee will aggregate all the summaries and recommendations from the individual courses and report to the faculty of the Department of Civil Engineering. Appropriate actions to improve student writing will be taken after the faculty discuss the results each year.

<https://fp.auburn.edu/writing/files/Writing%20Plans/Civil%20Engineering.pdf>

Appendix B: Norfolk State University Sample Comparisons of 2007 BCSSE, NSSE, and FSSE Data

How often do you expect to do (BCSSE) / did you do (NSSE) / has the typical student done (FSSE) each of the following?
(% Often + Very Often)



NSSE results help identify the areas of excellence and determine the areas for improvement, thus informing teaching and learning, planning, and decision-making.

— Alexi Matveev, Director, Office of Quality Enhancement and Critical Thinking Studies, Norfolk State University

NSSE Resources Relevant to Institutions in this Report

Regional and Specialized Accreditation Toolkits

nsse.iub.edu/links/accred_toolkits

A Guide to Contextualizing Your NSSE Data:

Cognitive Interviews and Focus Groups

nsse.iub.edu/links/cognitive_interviews

Working with NSSE Data: A Facilitator's Guide

nsse.iub.edu/links/facilitators_guide

NSSE Multi-Year Data Analysis Guide

nsse.iub.edu/links/mydag

NSSE Webinar Series

nsse.iub.edu/webinars

Customizing Your Institutional Report: A Guide to Selecting Your

Comparison Groups

nsse.iub.edu/links/comparison_groups

NSSE Users Workshops

nsse.iub.edu/workshop_presentations

NSSE Pocket Guides (English and Spanish versions)

A Pocket Guide to Choosing a College: Questions to ask on your college visits

Una Guia de Bolsillo Para Escoger una Universidad: Preguntas a hacer en tus visitas universitarias

nsse.iub.edu/html/pocket_guide_intro.cfm

National Survey of Student Engagement Staff

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